



UTAH SYSTEM OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION

# MEMORANDUM

March 27, 2025

## Strategic Plan Updates

The Strategic Plan Task Force will meet on Monday, April 7, to review major developments from the 2025 General Session and strategize how to ensure the Board's Strategic Plan continues to be highly aligned with the state's priorities and most pressing needs. The task force will assess the need to modify or add tactics to operationalize the most significant bills from the 2025 legislative session, including the First Credential initiative and the higher education strategic reinvestment exercise. The task force will present its recommendations for strategic plan changes to the Board at its May meeting.

In the third quarter of FY 2025, the Board and Office of the Commissioner have continued to make progress on the Board's Strategic Plan tactics. Examples of key highlights from this quarter are outlined below; additional updates can be found in the [Board's Strategic Plan Dashboard](#):

### Access

- **TACTIC:** *In coordination with the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) and other stakeholders, develop and implement comprehensive practices that ensure more K-12 students and adult learners pursue higher education and advance their career opportunities.*

Throughout the last half of 2024 and during the 2025 legislative session, the Commissioner's office worked closely with USBE and elected officials to develop the First Credential initiative, which resulted in the passage of [HB 260: First Credential Program](#). The First Credential Oversight Committee's upcoming development of the First Credential Master Plan and HB 260's grant program for Local Education Agencies and scholarship program for students will mark a fundamental shift in the way students engage in higher education during high school. This program will lay the foundation for students' early career success and their streamlined pursuit of additional postsecondary credentials.

- **TACTIC:** *Adopt a statewide tool that comports with the Board's statutory responsibility to prioritize common applications and direct admissions. Create an effective governance and collaboration model to promote use of the tool and develop and report measurable outcomes related to the tool's impact on improving postsecondary access.*

The Commissioner's office is currently managing updates to the Admit Utah website, including Spanish translation, map functionality, and enhancements to the financial aid chatbot. By October 2025, USHE will upgrade the Admit Utah platform and launch the first stage of the Direct Admissions initiative to increase admissions applications and support statewide access goals in select regions of the state. This stage will streamline and simplify admissions with data-sharing agreements and a real-time data-matching warehouse. Subsequent work on System integrations and enhancements will continue into 2026.

## Completion

- **TACTIC:** *Assist and incentivize institutions to develop appropriate sub-120 credit-hour bachelor's degrees.*

Since the adoption of [Board policy changes](#) that paved the way for the exploration of Bachelor of Applied Studies programs, degree-granting institutions have been studying the feasibility of identifying specific fields in which to pilot sub-120 credit-hour bachelor's degrees once barriers to accreditation are eliminated. Institutions will present these recommendations in the March Board meeting.

## Financial Value

- **TACTIC:** *Advance activities that increase FAFSA completion and student receipt of federal aid.*

Commissioner's office staff orchestrated and assisted with nearly 170 USHE-sponsored FAFSA completion events at high schools across Utah. USHE Student Affairs and Access team members attended many of these events in person to walk families through the FAFSA step-by-step and organized volunteer assistance from an additional 280 financial aid experts from across the System. As a result of these efforts and the tireless work of high school counselors and educators across the state, Utah is experiencing a 12% increase in FAFSA completion among high school seniors compared to the same time last year.

- **TACTIC:** *Increase student participation in high-quality work-based learning*

The Talent Ready Utah team developed the Talent Hub, a matchmaking software for connecting industry and students for work-based learning opportunities on a statewide platform. The passage of [SB 162: Talent Connect](#) will enable the TRU team to further enhance this product to provide optimal value for students and industry. In addition to the Talent Hub, the TRU team enhanced work-based learning opportunities in the Washington County School District by funding a youth apprenticeship program in partnership with several large manufacturing companies.

## **Economic Development**

- **TACTIC:** *Develop and promote workforce programs in collaboration with public education, industry, and state agencies.*

Talent Ready Utah entered into an MOU with Austria, the Governor's Office, and the Governor's Office of Economic Opportunity to establish an apprenticeship exchange program with Austria and to leverage Austrian models to continue to advance utilization and value of apprenticeships in Utah. Furthermore, TRU expanded the Talent Ready Apprenticeship Connection (TRAC) program to Snow College and, in collaboration with several industry partners, funded Utah Works programs at SLCC in composites, injection molding, and aircraft assembly, which helped fill 300 job openings in the state.

## **Commissioner's Recommendation**

This is an information item only; no action is required.